

Local Government Elections Task Force

Elections Task Force: Introduction

- ▶ Deliberating and making recommendations on legislation to improve local government elections
- ▶ Joint, consensus based body between Province and UBCM
- ▶ Provincial members:
 - ▶ Bill Bennett, Donna Barnett, Douglas Horne
- ▶ UBCM members:
 - ▶ Harry Nyce, Barbara Steele, Mary Sjostrom, Robert Hobson (alternate)

Elections Task Force: UBCM

- ▶ Collaborative process between UBCM and Province
- ▶ UBCM policy guides UBCM's Task Force members
- ▶ Area Association meetings build on March 12 consultation workshop
- ▶ Encourage feedback and comments

Elections Task Force: Process

- ▶ Public consultation focusing on written feedback
- ▶ In addition, specifically sought feedback from:
 - ▶ Local governments
 - ▶ Province-wide groups – e.g., business and labour reps
 - ▶ Election experts – e.g., academics, EBC, and LGMA
 - ▶ BC School Trustees
 - ▶ Provincial opposition
- ▶ March 12, UBCM consultation workshop
- ▶ Over 1000 submissions, mainly from individuals
- ▶ Website: www.localelectiontaskforce.gov.bc.ca

Elections Task Force: Topics Under Review

- ▶ Election cycle (term of office)
- ▶ Corporate vote
- ▶ Campaign finance – contribution and expense limits, disclosure, public financing, third party advertising, application to other voting
- ▶ Enforcement
- ▶ Role of Elections BC
- ▶ Candidate eligibility of some local government employees

Elections Task Force: Learning That...

- ▶ Scope and scale of local government elections are significant
- ▶ Vast majority of elections are successfully administered by local governments
- ▶ No value in fixing what isn't broken; need to fill the gaps
- ▶ Gaps in key areas – e.g., campaign finance disclosure; enforcement, including compliance advice; education
- ▶ Transparency matters

Elections Task Force: Local Elections Cycles

- ▶ Election cycle means local government term of office
- ▶ Since 1990: 3 year term
- ▶ Several Canadian jurisdictions have 4 year term
- ▶ Balance efficiency with accountability
- ▶ UBCM position: extension to 4 year term

Elections Task Force: Corporate Vote

- ▶ “Corporate vote” means business vote
- ▶ No corporate vote in Canada; historically some corporations could vote locally in BC
- ▶ Balance representation for business with principles like “one person, one vote”
- ▶ UBCM position: against corporate vote

Elections Task Force: Campaign Contribution Limits

- ▶ Would mean restrictions on **who** can contribute and/or **how much** can be contributed
- ▶ Currently, regulate **how** contributions are made, accepted, recorded, and disclosed
- ▶ Other jurisdictions: approach to contribution limits varies
- ▶ UBCM position: no endorsed resolutions; 2009 proposed resolution referred to Task Force

Elections Task Force: Campaign Expense Limits

- ▶ No expense limits locally
- ▶ Expense limits in some other jurisdictions and BC provincial elections
- ▶ Balance accessibility with administrative burden
- ▶ UBCM position: No endorsed resolutions; 2009 proposed resolution referred to Task Force

Elections Task Force: Campaign Finance Disclosure

- ▶ Campaign participants disclose campaign contributions, expenses, surpluses, and deficits
- ▶ Balance transparency with administrative burden and accessibility
- ▶ Pressure points:
 - ▶ Difficulties following/applying disclosure rules
 - ▶ Requirements too onerous for small campaigns
 - ▶ Requirements not stringent enough
 - ▶ Disclosure is too late
 - ▶ Disclosure statements not consistently accessible
- ▶ UBCM position: no recent endorsed resolutions; 2009 proposed resolution referred to Task Force

Elections Task Force: Third Party Advertising

- ▶ Limit amount spent and/or impose other rules (e.g., sponsorship disclosure)
- ▶ Campaign finance disclosure rules apply to “campaign organizers” (3rd party advertisers) spending \$500+
- ▶ Balance transparency with administrative burden
- ▶ UBCM position: endorsed resolution for review of anonymous election advertising

Elections Task Force: Other Voting

- ▶ “Other voting” means voting on a matter requiring or seeking elector assent (e.g., referendum)
- ▶ BC and most other provinces: campaign finance rules do not apply to local government other voting
- ▶ Balance transparency with effectiveness
- ▶ UBCM position: no endorsed resolutions; 2009 proposed resolution referred to Task Force

Elections Task Force: Public Financing

- ▶ Publicly funding candidates/parties and providing benefits to contributors
- ▶ No public financing for local elections; available provincially
- ▶ Some public financing in other jurisdictions; typically local funds
- ▶ UBCM position: for public financing if funded by Province

Elections Task Force: Enforcement

- ▶ Enforcement rules apply to all election activities
- ▶ Other jurisdictions: generally same as BC (e.g., variety of bodies)
- ▶ Pressure points:
 - ▶ Election administration enforcement rules
 - ▶ Campaign participant regulation
 - ▶ Barriers to enforcement
- ▶ UBCM position: no endorsed resolutions

Elections Task Force: Elections BC

- ▶ Local governments run all aspects of local elections
- ▶ Elections BC administers and oversees provincial elections
- ▶ Other jurisdictions: mainly local governments run elections
- ▶ Pressure points:
 - ▶ Perceived conflict of interest
 - ▶ Enforcement of campaign finance rules
- ▶ UBCM position: no endorsed resolutions

Elections Task Force: Local Government Employees

- ▶ Local government employees ineligible for office in own, or related, local government
- ▶ Exception for volunteer firefighters or employees of related local government?
- ▶ Balance accessibility with possible conflict of interest
- ▶ UBCM position: no endorsed resolutions; 2 2009 proposed resolutions referred to Task Force

Elections Task Force: Key Questions

- ▶ How do you think we should fill in the “gaps”?
 - ▶ What do you think should be done to improve accountability/fairness in campaign finance rules?
 - ▶ What do you think could be done to improve campaign finance disclosure?
 - ▶ What do you think could be done to improve how campaign finance or other election rules are enforced?
- ▶ What are your views on the other topics under review?

Elections Task Force: Next Steps

- ▶ **Thank you for your feedback!**
- ▶ **Website: www.localelectiontaskforce.gov.bc.ca**
 - ▶ Read the discussion papers
 - ▶ View feedback received
- ▶ **Website: ubcm.ca**
 - ▶ View feedback from March 12 consultation event
- ▶ **Task Force report to government and UBCM:**
 - ▶ May 30, 2010

